co-opt the permanent exchange relationships which Baird had already established. The missionaries' greatest success had been with those few people living at the Air Strip who were not immediately affected by the local mining economy. Furthermore, Baird, with his long standing allegiance to Guyanese nationalism, had always acted as the emissary for the Government in the region. In contrast, the American missionaries operated internationally in the promotion of their own interests. Clearly, Baird was the obvious choice for government support in this strategic frontier outpost close to the Venezuelan border, particularly since 1962 when Venezuela reopened a border dispute along the North West District.[4]

International events have made the remote Upper Barama River area strategic to Guyana's national development. In order to secure the hinterland, programs have been designed to tie these areas to the national political economy. In the Upper Barama area, this goal has been implemented by a settlement project at Baramita Air Strip.

The Baramita Air Strip Settlement

Late in 1969, Baird ceased mining operations altogether. His imminent withdrawal from the area would have left many impoverished Amerindians exposed to the potential of Venezuelan influence. It was also important not to abandon the air strip close to the Venezuelan frontier for other than Guyanese use. Thus, government programs were introduced with new resources administrated by new personnel. Baird moved to Baramita Air Strip where he assumed a salaried position as Project Officer in the Department of Interior

175 A headman
622 was recognized in each settlement (John Miller in Savari), but his authority rested on his influence. Aspects of personality, the number of relatives, as well as physical strength were factors in the choice of headman. Although the duties of headman lacked definition, for the most part they involved coalescing group
175 opinion and action. All of this was done informally. Group action
627 would be taken against individuals who threatened the pattern of sharing resources and rendering assistance within the settlement. Ostracism, exile, or, more rarely, violence would be employed (Gillin 1934:337).

175 At this time, the Upper Barama River Caribs constituted an indig-
[648] enous population within a British colony. In this colonial environ-
[701] ment, there was no organization among these Caribs for war or defense
[622] which would compel leadership (Gillin 1934:344). Dispersed in the
175 rain forest, remote from the center of European power, there was no
628 other basis for unity among this population. Before extensive regional trade and a money economy were introduced by the mining companies, these dispersed settlements tended to be closed with regard to patterns of obtaining and sharing subsistence resources. Exchanges
*177 among settlements involved shifts of personnel. Increasingly, the
621 boundary of the resource sharing social unit has become constricted within the larger, more stabilized settlements around centralized networks of regional exchange.

Organization for Gold Mining

*179 In addition to centralizing settlements, employment and other
592 market opportunities provided by gold mining activities from 1940 to
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